



Transformation at Home and Abroad

A recent Wall Street Journal article pointed out that "idea life cycles are shrinking. From the 1950s to the 1970s, it typically took more than a decade for interest in an idea, measured by press mentions, to peak. By the 1990s, that interval had shrunk to fewer than three years."

The article served as a pointed reminder that the time available to us to successfully implement information technology (IT) solutions and embrace new ideas is constrained by:

- The ever increasing pace of new technology development
- The time available to garner senior leadership support in an environment where military personnel and political appointees have relatively short tenures, and
- The apparently short attention span that we have as a society for new management theories and ideas.

If we are emotionally and organizationally prepared to take advantage of new approaches and work toward truly meaningful change, opportunities abound across the Navy and Marine Corps team.

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) provides a wonderful leverage point to adapt dramatic improvements in information management. The QDR includes a clean focus on making organizations more "horizontal," moving to portfolio management processes, creating common data structures, providing access to authoritative information sources, emphasizing the flow of knowledge and aligning to enterprise-wide solutions.

The day-to-day application of Lean Six Sigma is another path to implement important process changes and improvements. The Secretary of the Navy has made clear his commitment that Lean Six Sigma be embraced across the Department, and has repeatedly pointed out how its adoption will (1) improve efficiency, (2) improve quality, (3) improve safety, and (4) increase employee satisfaction.

As IT professionals, we are called to champion these change opportunities. The successful use of information management and IT to improve our warfighting and support processes has never been more important. Around the world, in challenging environments, the importance of successful information leadership is viewed as crucial to an organization's success. Even in Iraq, where the new government has such a daunting imperative to rebuild the nation, the use of IT is recognized as a crucial enabler.

Recently, I have had the honor to work with U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Gary Connor and his team from the Multi-National Force-Iraq in their support to the Iraqi government in implementing a successful IT governance structure and implementation plan. Similar efforts are ongoing in Afghanistan and other nations dealing with complex rebuilding efforts. These governments share a recognition that "getting IT right" is worth a significant commitment of time and personal effort.

The imperative is no less urgent here, as we work to achieve the transformational vision of our Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps.

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